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UNTO THE HEAVY LADEN

A VILLAGE SCENE IN INDIA

A DEMONSTRATION

BY

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Enter the Missionary and Bible woman.

Bible woman. Here is a good place, Miss Sahib, in the shade of this big tree.

Miss. All right. (They seat themselves.) We'll begin singing.

"Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong,
They are weak but He is strong.

"Yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me; the Bible tells me so."

During singing enter (one by one) a group of native women. They are sucking sugar cane. Some have babies with them, dirty and unkempt. They nudge each other, look curiously at the foreign woman and at the Bible woman.

Miss. Don't you want us to tell you a story? If you sit down we'll tell you a story. (Some sit down; others stand.) I want to tell you about Jesus who loves us.

First Woman. Oh, no not *loves women.* We never heard of anything like that. That's a queer story. (They shrug their shoulders and hold up their hands.)

Second Woman. How strangely you dress, Miss Sahib. Aren't these uncomfortable on your feet? (They examine shoes.)

Miss. Oh, no. But I want to tell you about Jesus. He is God's son. He came to this world and lived here to tell us He loved us.

Third Woman (entering). Won't Miss Sahib have some refreshment? Won't the Miss Sahib come into my unworthy house?

Miss. Thank you; but we will stay on the outside to talk to these women. (Continuing.) This Jesus came to the earth to tell us He loved us.

Third Woman, enters again. Here is some refreshment for Miss Sahib. Here is some sour milk and some of our bread. It is the best I have to offer. It is what we eat most of the time.

Miss. Thank you very much. (The woman pours water from a bowl over the hands of the Missionary and Bible woman. They wash and dry their hands and then drink the milk and eat a piece of bread.) I have many times seen the women and girls making this bread and putting it to dry by the roadside or on the side of the houses. Thank you very much.

Fourth Woman. Won't you sing again, Miss Sahib?
Missionary and Bible woman sing.

"Jesus loves me this I know
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong;—

A little widow passes on the outskirts of the crowd. The women and girls jump up and cry out.

Oh, don't let the little widow come near us! Don't let her touch us or we are unclean! (Shout at her.) AWAY! AWAY!

The Bible woman goes to her and persuades the little girl to come under her arm. The girls and women all draw away off the scene.

Bible woman. (calls to them.) She won't touch you. She is going to stay here by me. She won't be anywhere near you. (To the little girl.) How old are you?

Widow. Four years old.

Miss. And a WIDOW!

Bible woman. Yes, Miss Sahib. You see, the man she was engaged to be married to when she was a baby died. So she is a widow.

Miss. Have you a mother or father, my dear?

Widow. No, Miss Sahib; they died of the plague a few days ago. I wish I could stay with *you.*

Bible woman. Listen; we are going to sing again.

"I think when I read that sweet story of old
When Jesus was here among men;
How He took little children as lambs to His fold;
I wish I had been with Him then.

"I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me;
That I might have seen His kind look when He said
Let the little ones come unto me."

(During the singing the women and girls draw back cautiously. Young girl with heavy jar of water on her shoulder draws near.)

Bible woman. Don't you want to stay and hear the music and a story?

Girl. Oh, I can't. I must get the water for the family and get the meal for my husband.

Miss. How old are you?

Girl. Fourteen years old.

Miss. How long have you been married?

Girl. I don't know, Miss Sahib; it seems a long time since I left my own home.

Miss. How old is your husband?

Girl. Oh, I don't know, Miss Sahib. He is older than my father was.

Miss. How many are in your family?

Girl. Well, there are four other wives and their children. Of course I have to get the meals for them too, because I am the

youngest wife. I must hurry or my husband will beat me; and the other wives will beat me, too.

Miss. Oh, if only you knew that Jesus loves you how different your life would be!

Girl. (Nervous and hurried.) But I must go now. (Wistfully.) Oh, I wish I could come some other time. I never heard any music like that before. Won't you come again?

Bible woman. We'll try to come again. (Exit young girl.)

Fifth Woman. Miss Sahib, *my* husband has four wives too. He just brought a new one a little while ago.

Another young woman approaches the group.

Miss. Listen to me. This Jesus came to this world to tell us He loves us. And then He died for us to show us He loved us.

The newcomer rushes up to the Missionary and Bible woman.

Oh, Miss Sahib, that's the Jesus I heard about at my village. Oh, tell me more.

Bible woman. You have heard about Jesus?

Newcomer. You and the Miss Sahib were in my village and told about Jesus. Then my father took me away to be married. But oh, I remember about Jesus, because He loves us. He loves even girls and women and baby girls. And He died for us. But that's all I know. Tell me more, oh, tell me more, Miss Sahib, please.

Miss. My dear, I'll tell you all I can.

Newcomer. And Miss Sahib, my babies have all been girls. But somehow I didn't mind so much because I remembered that Jesus loves even girl babies. And, Miss Sahib, they all died. They died in the summer. And I don't know about that, Miss Sahib.

Miss. When little babies die they go to live with Jesus. He has gone to His Father and He takes all who love Him home with Him. And there is no more crying there. They live with Him in heaven. And if you love Him you will go to Him when you die and be with Jesus and with them.

Newcomer. Oh, *that's* what I wanted to know. I don't see how it *can* be true. But something all along has told me here (putting hand on heart) that it is really true that Jesus loves me; and so I'll hope that this is true, too.

Sixth Woman. Miss Sahib, you say that this Jesus loves WOMEN—and girls—and—and—BABIES? Who is He?

Miss. He is God's son, His only son.

Seventh Woman. Which god? There are so many we can't count them.

Miss. These are not true gods. This is the one and only true God. He is the *good* God.

Eighth Woman. The gods are not *good*, Miss Sahib.

Miss. Yes; this one true God is GOOD. He is our great Father and He loves all His children.

Seventh Woman. But not WOMEN. That couldn't be. Why, we are not of as much account as the cows.

Miss. Yes, you are in God's sight. He sent His son Jesus.

He lived on this earth and He taught and He healed and He forgave sins and told He loved all His children and wanted them to be good so they could come to live with Him in heaven. And then He died for us to show us He loved us.

Eighth woman. But WOMEN don't go to Heaven, Miss Sahib.

Miss. Yes, Jesus takes women to Heaven.

Bible woman. Now don't you want to hear what Jesus said?

Bible woman reads:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Can you learn to say that? "For God so loved the world"—(The women and girls repeat it.)

"That he gave his only begotten Son," etc.

While the Bible woman is teaching the women and girls to repeat the Bible verses a little girl rushes up to the Missionary:

Little Girl. Oh, Miss Sahib, *you* gave us food when we were starving last year.

Miss. Gave you food?

Little Girl. Yes, in the famine last year. And you said that the food was sent by women across the seas who loved some one; who was it? And some one loved us, too. I've tried to remember the name. So many of us have talked about Him since and we want you to tell us His name again.

Miss. His name is JESUS.

Little Girl (eagerly). Yes, JESUS; I remember now. He loves us. He loves even girls and women, doesn't He? And He died for us. Can't I go with you to your school and learn more about Him?

Miss. Oh, my dear, I can't take you; I haven't a place for you.

Little Girl. Oh, I don't care about that. I'll sleep on the floor or anywhere. I just want to learn about Jesus and learn to read about Him.

Miss. But, my dear, I haven't any more scholarships that give money to pay for your food.

Little Girl. Oh, I won't eat much, Miss Sahib. I'm used to being hungry, you know, and I shan't mind. I just want to learn about Jesus and then I'll go back to my village to tell the others about Him.

Miss. Oh, if our women only knew would they not take more scholarships in India? I CAN'T take you, my dear little girl. (Little girl cries.)

Bible woman. The women have learned the verses, Miss Sahib.

Women repeat:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And that means WOMEN—and GIRLS—and—BABIES.

An old woman who has been prominent, standing on the outside of the group listening all the while, rushes suddenly up to the Missionary and Bible woman, shrieking, "That's not true! That's not true! No one loves women. Don't I know? Haven't I seen lots of women? Don't I know what girlhood is? Don't I know the abuse heaped on girls? Don't I know what marriage is at the age of ten? Don't I know the suffering of motherhood? With no care and no love? Don't I know the drudgery of living? Don't I know the agonies of famine? Don't I know what it means to have my daughters taken off to be temple girls? And to have new and younger wives brought to my house by my husband? And now I know what it means to be DIVORCED! I don't know why. Only because I'm old. And I have borne my husband sons, too. But this morning he said to me GO— and that is all there is to it. And I cannot take my children with me. And I am alone without husband or home or children. And you say some one *loves women*? Oh, it's not true! It's not true!" (Falls down with her face on the ground weeping.)

Miss. (with her arm around the shoulders of the woman.) Yes, God sent his son Jesus to tell us He loved us. And he loves *women*, too. And he forgives their sins.

Woman (looking up). Will Jesus—love—an—old—woman—like—me?

Miss. Yes, He *does* love you. And He wants you to love Him and to be like Him and when you die He will take you to live with Him in heaven. (Woman gets up.) Sit down, and I'll tell you more about Him.

Woman. No, I don't need to know any more. (Slowly) Jesus loves me. Jesus—loves—me. That's all I need to know. (Goes slowly.) Jesus—loves—me. Jesus—loves—me.

Tenth Woman. Miss Sahib, please come to my village and tell us about Jesus. Oh, DO come. We've never heard about Him. Oh, you must come, Miss Sahib.

Miss. How far is it?

Tenth Woman. It isn't far. It's just the next village.

Miss. All right. We'll come there tomorrow.

Tenth Woman. Oh, I'm so glad. I'll go right away and tell all of them that you are coming so they'll all be ready to hear you. Goodbye. (Exit.)

Enter woman.

Newcomer. Miss Sahib, I was on my way to the school to find you to tell you that our village is all ready to be baptized. We all love Jesus and serve Him and want to be baptized, Can you send us a teacher?

Miss. How did you learn about Jesus?

Newcomer. Why, the Chaudhri of our village brought a new wife a while ago. She had been at the Jesus school and she told all of us about Jesus and now the whole village is ready to be baptized.

Miss. What is the name of the Chaudhri's new wife?

Newcomer. Her name is Lilavati Baksh.

Miss. Lilavati Baksh! Why, she was in my school. But she was there only six months! Then her father took her away to be married. And you say she told all the village about Jesus?

Newcomer. Yes. And now the whole village are ready to be baptized. There are about two hundred of us.

Miss. (To Bible Woman). If the women in America only knew what ONE scholarship would do! How far is the village?

Newcomer. It is just the second village from here. It is the next village beyond where you are going tomorrow.

Miss. Then we'll come there the day after. We can't baptize you but we will come and teach you.

Bible woman (to group). And now will you say the verses again before we go?

Women repeat.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Bible woman. That is very good. We must go now.

Women. Won't you come again soon and teach us?

Bible woman. We'll come again as soon as we can.

Little Widow. I'm going with you.

Miss. How can we take you?

Little Widow. I don't know, but I'm going with you. I'm going to stay with you.

Bible woman. I think we can take her and put her in the orphanage, Miss Sahib; don't you?

Miss. I think we will have to take her. There is room for one more there. And then I'll write to America and ask some one to take a scholarship to support her. Then we must pray very earnestly that some one will take her support.

Little Famine Girl. I'm going with you, too, Miss Sahib. My mother and father are dead, and I'm going to the Jesus school to learn about Him and then I'll come back to tell my village about Him.

Miss. But, my dear, I told you I didn't have room for you, nor the food for you.

Little Famine Girl. But, you know, Miss Sahib, I said I wouldn't mind that. I'll sleep anywhere; and I'm used to being hungry, you know. And then I'll come back to tell my village about Jesus.

Bible woman. This little famine girl might be as great a blessing to her village as Lilavati Baksh was in bringing the gospel story to her village of two hundred people.

Miss. Oh I know it; I know it. But we haven't another scholarship. If only the women in America knew! If only they knew that it is not the many things a missionary *does* that break her health; it is the very many things she can NOT do that break her health.

(Little famine girl clings to her skirts crying and begging to go with her. A little girl comes running across the scene to the missionary.)

Little Girl. Miss Sahib, when did he die?

Miss. What is it, my dear?

Little Girl. *When* did he die, Miss Sahib?

Miss. Die?

Little Girl. When did this Jesus who loves us die for us? Was it just now?

Miss. Oh, shall I have to tell this dear little girl it was *two thousand years ago* He died; and that we have just come with the message to India?

Little Girl. Oh, then if it was that long ago, why didn't you come before, Miss Sahib? So that my mother could have heard before she died that some one loved her and that Jesus died for her? Why didn't you come before?

Miss. OH! why DIDN'T we come before? (Hands outstretched.) Ask the women in America WHY we didn't come before. And ask the women in America why there are so few of us *now* telling the story and so few in the schools preparing to tell the story to their own people. Why, oh, why? (Covers face with both hands. Bows head.)